

THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 1904.

DIVERS MEN AND MATTERS.

Essays and Addresses, 1900-1903. By the Right Hon. Lord Avebury, P.C. Pp. 296. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1903.) Price 7s. 6d. net.

INCLUDED in this volume are short studies of the life and work of Huxley, Ruskin, Richard Jefferies, and Macaulay; speeches on the institution of Bank Holidays, and the Early Closing Bill for Shop Assistants; three papers on trade and commerce; three addresses on education; and three other papers.

The first paper gains in interest from Lord Avebury's personal acquaintance with Huxley. The author gives an appreciation of the man as well as of his work. They were associated in the foundation of the Anthropological Institute, on commissions on scientific instruction, in the Metaphysical Society, and as members of the X-Club, which included also Hooker, Spencer and Tyndall. Lord Avebury deals with Huxley's work in natural science, in education, and in metaphysics. Huxley was foremost in showing the fascination of scientific study. As Sir Michael Foster says, "Whatever bit of life Huxley touched—and there were few living things he did not touch—he shed light on it and left his mark." As to education, Huxley was a member of the first London School Board, where he made valuable suggestions as to the moral, physical and domestic, as well as to the intellectual and scientific training of the young. His attitude is well illustrated by his saying, "Teach a child what is wise—that is morality; teach him what is wise and beautiful—that is religion." In the Metaphysical Society, Huxley had difficulty in ranking himself. "Most of my colleagues were 'ists' of one sort or another; and, however kind and friendly they might be, I, the man without a rag to cover himself with, could not fail to have . . . uneasy feelings. . . . So I took thought, and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of agnostic." He described his position as being "Not among fatalists, for I take the conception of necessity to have a logical, and not a physical, foundation; not among materialists, for I am utterly incapable of conceiving the existence of matter if there is no mind in which to picture that existence; not among atheists, for the problem of the ultimate cause of existence is one which seems to me to be hopelessly out of reach of my poor powers."

It may not have been possible to deal fairly with the work and personality of so many-sided a genius as Ruskin in one short lecture, but it was surely unnecessary to have spent so much care in showing the inconsistencies and paradoxes with which Ruskin delighted to adorn his writings, to the exclusion of his positive and essential teaching; and Lord Avebury himself asserts that the spirit of the critic, always of more importance than the letter, is true and noble. Fortunately, Ruskin's attitude towards art is not dealt with, but the paper is completed with some of

Ruskin's exquisite descriptions of plants, animals, water and mountains.

The paper on Richard Jefferies is appreciative and interesting, and it is a happy conjunction that he is placed after Huxley and Ruskin. While Huxley compelled Nature to yield her secrets to his analysis, and Ruskin depicted her with his marvellous skill as a word-painter, Jefferies approached her with the passionate rapture of a lover, and lived with her in intimate study of all her secret moods.

But perhaps Lord Avebury is more interesting in his capacity of social reformer than as literary critic. He gives the history of the initiation of Bank Holidays, and dwells on the advantage of the uniformity which allows members of one family scattered in different occupations a possibility of periodic reunion. The plea for legislation for early closing, which follows, is forcible and convincing; the general need and demand for shorter hours is evident, and so is the impossibility of any sufficient reform on voluntary lines.

In the paper on British commerce, written before the fiscal controversy became acute, Lord Avebury supports the optimistic view that we have made rapid progress, and that there is no "reason for despondency or discouragement" as to the future, if we improve our national education, practise economy in national expenditure, and improve the relations between capital and labour. As regards the last, however, he does not get beyond the somewhat obvious remark that "In the interests alike of employers and employed it will be well if wiser and more conciliatory counsels prevail in the future." In dealing with fiscal policy, Lord Avebury has many telling illustrations of the advantages of free trade, and gives some very important evidence as to the difficulties which Germany finds in the Kartell system; but his paper will not be in any way convincing to the advocates of an Imperial fiscal policy, for he does not come to close quarters with their ideas and arguments. The paper is loose both in style and logic; what are we to think of a writer who holds that Canada's preference to us is a dominant cause of the migration from the United States to the North-West Provinces. "I am very pleased to see that Canada has herself benefited by the reduction. Our trade has increased 3,000,000*l.* with Canada, and the result to Canada has been that her people have got an increased supply of cheap goods, her agriculture has benefited, farmers are flocking in from the United States."

The eleventh paper is an attack on municipal trading. It is not possible to deal with so highly controversial a subject in our present space. The most is made of the difficulties, risks, dangers and possible loss when municipalities undertake work which private enterprise could do as well, and these will be admitted by most unprejudiced students; but no real help is given to the very real difficulty of laying down principles which should govern municipal action. Such a paragraph as follows hardly shows a scientific view of a complicated economic problem:—

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"As regards the telegraphs, it is sometimes said that though we have paid dearly for it, at any rate we have a more effective system. This is, of course, a matter of opinion, but I doubt it. My belief is that competition would have given us a better system. This cannot be proved, but I may give an illustration . . ."

The papers on education derive interest from Lord Avebury's position on three commissions and in the University of London, and form a strong and convincing argument in favour of the increased attention to science which we may hope is gradually finding place; they are marked by the aptly selected quotations for which readers of "The Pleasures of Life" are prepared.

When a writer publishes essays on so wide a range of subjects, he deliberately invites criticism; and, indeed, readers of this volume will ask in several cases whether this or that address was worth printing. But if the papers are not taken too seriously, much will be found of interest, if little that is new. The book resembles the modern daily paper in many other respects; there is a wide range of ideas, something for everybody, much hasty writing, and frequent repetition of the same items in different guises.

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH.

Humanism: Philosophical Essays. By F. C. S. Schiller, M.A. Pp. xxvii+297. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903.) Price 8s. 6d. net.

Ueber die Grenzen der Gewissheit. By Dr. Ernst Dürr. Pp. vii+152. (Verlag der Dürr'schen Buchhandlung, 1903.) Price 3.50 marks.

Tat und Wahrheit. Eine Grundfrage der Geisteswissenschaft. By Hans von Lüpke. Pp. 35. (Leipzig: Verlag der Dürr'schen Buchhandlung, 1903.) Price 50 pf.

Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. New Series. Vol. iii. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903.) Price 10s. 6d.

THE collection of articles and addresses presented in Mr. Schiller's volume exhibits all the characteristics familiar to readers of his previous work. Paradox is, of course, not wanting; humour enlivens discussion, not shrinking from the antithesis of "comic" and "cosmic," or such a phrase as "ponderous pondering"; philosophy, literary criticism, and the Psychological Research Society are duly represented. Mr. Schiller's style incurs one great disadvantage: it sometimes leaves the reader in doubt whether the matter is really to be taken seriously; perhaps this is why Mr. Schiller has still to complain that philosophers neglect his imperatives.

The keynote to the book is pragmatism, and the essays here collected may claim the unity of this one theme. The parts vary considerably both in quality and subject. The essay in literary criticism, "Concerning Mephistopheles," may claim a first place; it is interesting, novel and lucid, in short, our author at his best. The first eight essays, dealing with some of the most vexed questions of philosophy, have common

characteristics and equal value. Mr. Schiller triumphs in destructive criticism; the common-sense element of pragmatism is, in his hands, a powerful weapon against extravagances not unknown in recent philosophy; pragmatism is thus justified as a tonic; if we object that man does not live by tonics, we are again victims of a triumph, for a collection of essays is not a system and not open to a systematic criticism. The essay on "Reality and 'Idealism'" illustrates the first point; for the second, let the dialogue on "Useless Knowledge" plead its occupancy of space. One of the most satisfactory essays is "Darwinism and Design," and "Pessimism" is a subject which, directly and indirectly, inspires some of the best passages in the book. The closing sections on "Immortality" would call for no remark except that such a subject too often attracts the uncritical; even they will probably think Mr. Schiller's concept of "spirit" might have been definitely explained, while his admission that the "state after death" does not form a part of the experience of any subject in the sense that "real" and "dream" states do, might well have excused not a few of the closing pages. One thing more is also a desideratum: that concept of "purpose" on which pragmatism bases its claim to rejuvenate philosophy must be elaborated; for this we wait, not without fasting, taking the present contribution as earnest of the systematic exposition which the introduction seems to promise.

As the title denotes, Dr. Dürr's book deals with the question of boundaries, consequently it is critical rather than constructive, negative rather than positive. The central problem is, How much may be called certain? and, from the author's point of view, the immediately given is alone fully certain. The immediately given is the psychological actuality. But we cannot rest in this; problems arise which compel us to make distinctions; even consistency cannot ensure "reality," for dreams may be consistent and yet life is more than a dream.

It appears then that the necessity of the immediately given coexists with a necessity for that which is not immediately given, but that which is not immediately given has not certainty—it is the object of belief and is not justified by any formal logical proof, but by the worth which attaches to our conception of it. Realism, for example, is without proof, but it is right as against anti-realism by virtue of its superior value as a basis for science.

Having thus found belief at the very roots of science we may consider some belief to have some certainty; we may further show that other beliefs, ethical and metaphysical, are not less certain than this scientific belief, and with that the limit of our author's work is reached. The result is a defence of belief against some, and only some, attacks. It might be objected that the ethical belief cannot be defended by proving it not less valuable than the scientific belief without giving the concept of value an ambiguous significance. The preliminary discussions on "Erkenntnistheorie" and the question of a "Kriterium" contain much interesting criticism; but the subsequent justification of belief seems built on inadequate foundations.